"The Origins of the 'Iron Curtain' Speech"

by

MARTIN GILBERT

CHURCH OF ST. MARY ALDERMANBURY, CITY OF LONDON
Rebuilt by Sir Christopher Wren, in 1677, after the Great Fire

The First Crosby Kemper Lecture
April 26, 1981
WESTMINSTER COLLEGE
Fulton, Missouri

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"The Origins of the 'Iron Curtain' Speech"

a lecture
by

Martin Gilbert

Official Biographer of Sir Winston Churchill

delivered at

The Winston Churchill Memorial
Westminster College
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Approved For Release 2008/02/27 : CIA-RDP85M00364R000600980017-4

President Saunders, ladies and gentlemen, I am deeply honoured to be invited here to Westminster College, to talk at the site of Churchill's famous 'Iron Curtain Speech', and to do so about the origins of that speech itself.

Since receiving your invitation for this inaugural Crosby Kemper lecture, I have tried to piece together the story of Churchill's experience of Soviet communism — and of his reactions to that experience — in the thirty years leading up to his speech here at Westminster College; and I thank you most warmly for having asked me to present the fruits of my researches to you on this beautiful Missouri afternoon.

Many thousands of miles to the east: across the Atlantic Ocean and across the wide democratic zone of western Europe, the Iron Curtain is still there. I crossed it myself, only three weeks ago, on the Austria-Czechoslovak border, just half way between Stettin and Trieste.

For twenty minutes the train, with its one through carriage from Rome to Moscow, stopped astride the Iron Curtain: it is a fierce curtain of tall fences, vigilant watchtowers, barbed wire, and electronic eyes.

Last night, here in Fulton Missouri, during an extremely pleasant reception, I was told two things about Churchill: first that he was spoilt and selfish, and second that he was cantankerous and quarrelsome.

But surely here, of all places, here on this delightful campus, where you have built, and are still building such a superb and living memorial to Churchill, something should also be known of the superb and living quality of his thoughts and understanding of world affairs. *His* quarrel was with tyranny.

Here at Westminster College — at the age of 71 — with fifty years of public life behind him, Churchill spoke with foreboding of the behaviour and intentions of Soviet Russia and outlined a course of common democratic unity, led by Britain and the United States. Churchill's knowledge of Russia stretched back more than 20 years before the Communist revolution of November 1917. Indeed, the actual occasion on which his parents first met was at a ball on board the yacht of the Tsarevich, later Tsar Nicholas II.

Churchill's own memories of the Russian Empire centred on three facets of Tsarist imperial rule, each of which was greatly to influence his attitude to the Soviets:

First, his hatred of the official, Government sponsored anti-semitism of Tsarist Russia, as shown in the anti-Jewish violence, or pogroms in the first decade of this century. In 1906, Churchill had been the main speaker, at a mass rally in Manchester, to protest against official Tsarist connivance in these anti-Jewish attacks.

Second, his dislike of the Tsarist treatment of the Poles, and his belief that the twentieth century must eventually see what Churchill himself was to call (in 1918) 'the harmonious disposition' of Europe among its inhabitants, — his belief and sympathy for, an independent Poland, freed from Russian tutelage, was instinct in Churchill's early thought: he admired enormously the Polish courage, hopeless though it had proved, in the uprisings against Tsarist Russia in the 1830s and 1860s.

And third — and we come now to the most complex, and ultimately most vexed questions in Soviet relations with the outside world — the right of Russia, if she were to join in the defeat of Germany, (whether in 1914 or 1941) to ter-

ritorial recompense and reward, to the return of 'lost' territories, and to secure, defensible borders.

In 1914 Churchill accepted that if Russia were to remain in the war, and to contribute to the Allied victory over Germany, then she would be able to expand her territorial control, to Constantinople, the Straits, and the warm waters of the Mediterranean. It was to enable Russia to remain at war, in 1915, that Churchill and Kitchener had launched the Gallipoli expedition, when Russia looked on the verge of surrender, pressed back by German forces in the west, and Turkish forces in the east.

It was the Russian Bolshevik decision to leave the war in March 1918, that made Churchill feel that this, the first international act of the Bolsheviks, and their enduring legacy, was to cut Russia off, as an ally which had fought for 2½ years, from the benefits of victory when it came.

As a result of this anti-war decision by Lenin and Trotsky, Churchill realized from the onset of Communist rule, when at its weakest, that Russia would seek, when once again strong, to regain those areas which she regarded as hers and which she had only lost as a result of the political decision to leave the war.

Henceforth, from 1917 until today, one question was to emerge — and re-emerge — in almost each decade: how far west would Russia wish to go — or be allowed to go.

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At the time of the Bolshevik revolution, in November 1917, Churchill was Minister of Munitions in David Lloyd George's wartime coalition, and for the first five years of the Bolshevik triumph in Russia, Churchill remained an influencial member of British policy-making at the centre: first as Minister of Munitions, then as Secretary of State for War and Air, and finally as Secretary of State for the Colonies.

In these three posts, and over these five years, he was an avid and careful reader, of all the information reaching Britain — public and secret — about the nature of Bolshevik rule.

And it was as a result of Churchill's detailed knowledge of the actual behaviour of the Bolsheviks inside Russia, and of their plans to spread revolution outside, that he urged Lloyd George to strengthen the democratic forces in Weimar Germany. Indeed, as early as November 1918, on the day before the armistice with Germany, Churchill had told the British War Cabinet: 'We might have to build up the German Army, as it was important to get Germany on her legs again, for fear of the spread of Bolshevism'.

In Churchill's mind, Bolshevism was an evil system, totally destructive of all the freedoms, and all the human values, in which he believed. Already, by 1917, an enemy of tyranny for more than twenty years, for him Bolshevism was the supreme tyranny, crushing all of the liberties he prized. Even in Bolshevism's early days, when sailors of the Red Fleet had shot down and murdered Captain Cromie, the British Naval Attache, inside the Petrograd Embassy, Churchill had been outraged, telling the War Cabinet on 4 September 1918: 'The exertions which a nation is prepared to make to protect its individual representa-

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Every subsequent piece of information which reached Churchill confirmed him in the view that Bolshevism was totally destructive of individual liberty. At first he hoped that it would, as he told his colleagues at the Imperial War Cabinet on 31 December 1918, 'be exposed and swept away by a General Election', held if necessary under 'Allied auspices'. Later he sought to strengthen the existing Allied support for each of the anti-Bolshevik Russian armies pressing in at different times upon Moscow and Petrograd.

Churchill's main task in 1919 and 1920, a task imposed upon him by Lloyd George, and carried out with reluctance, was actually to withdraw the British troops which Lloyd George himself had sent a year earlier to help the Russian anti Bolsheviks.

Yet Churchill was convinced that unless Bolshevism were overthrown, western democracy and civilisation would be threatened, and might even be destroyed. As he wrote of Lenin, Trotsky and the other Bolshevik leaders in a public article on 22 June 1919: 'Theirs is a war against civilised society which can never end. They seek as the first condition of their being the overthrow and destruction of all existing institutions and of every State and Government now standing in the world. They too aim at a worldwide and international league, but a league of the failures, the criminals, the unfit, the mutinous, the morbid, the deranged, and the distraught in every land; and between them and such order of civilisation as we have been able to build up since the dawn of history there can, as Lenin rightly proclaims, be neither truce nor pact'.

It was the tyrannical aspect of Lenin's regime that most roused Churchill's fury. Writing in January 1920 he declared: 'A Tyrant is one who allows the fancies of his mind to count for more in deciding action than the needs, feelings, hopes, lives and physical well-being of the people over whom he has obtained control. A tyrant is one who wrecks the lives of millions for the satisfaction of his own conceptions. So far as possible in this world no man should have such power, whether under an imperialist, republican, militarist, socialist or soviet form of Government'.

On 1 May 1920 Churchill set out his view of Bolshevik tyranny in a Cabinet memorandum. The Bolsheviks, he wrote, have 'committed, and are committing unspeakable atrocities, and are maintaining themselves in power by a terrorism on an unprecedented scale, and by the denial of the most elementary rights of citizenship and freedom'.

Churchill's hatred of Bolshevism sprang from his belief that the ultimate aim of the communist philosophy was the complete destruction of Parliamentary democracy, personal liberty, and free speech. He had of course followed the events of post-revolutionary Russia closely: the suppression by Lenin of the Constituent Assembly — with its already predominantly proletarian franchise — Trotsky's brutal suppression of the Kronstadt revolt, the closing of churches and the killing of priests.

To an audience at Sunderland Churchill set out, on 1 January 1920, the points of difference as he saw them, telling his audience, about all communist and socialist systems: 'We believe in Parliamentary Government exercised in accordance with the will of the majority of the electors constitutionally and

freely ascertained. They seek to overthrow Parliament by direct action or other violent means . . . and then to rule the mass of the nation in accordance with their theories, which have never yet been applied successfully, and through the agency of self-elected or sham-elected caucuses of their own. They seek to destroy capital. We seek to control monopolies. They seek to eradicate the idea of individual possession. We seek to use the great mainspring of human endeavour as a means of increasing the volume of production on every side and of sharing the fruits far more broadly and evenly among millions of individual homes. We defend Freedom of conscience and religious equality. They seek to exterminate every form of religious belief that has given comfort and inspiration to the soul of man. . .'

In August 1920 the Red Army advanced into Poland, approaching within a few miles of Warsaw. Even Lloyd George was so horrified that he delivered an ultimatum to the Bolsheviks to halt their forces. In the event, it was a Polish victory, the so-called 'Miracle of the Vistula', not the British ultimatum, which saved Polish independence.

At the very moment when the Red Army seemed poised for victory, Churchill had written an article in the *Evening News:* 'It is easy for those who live a long way from the Russian Bolshevists, — especially those who are protected by a good strip of salt water, and who stand on the firm rock of an active political democracy — to adopt a cool and airy view of their Communist doctrines and machinations. But a new, weak, impoverished, famishing State like Poland, itself quaking internally, is placed in hourly jeopardy by close and continuous contact with such neighbours. The Bolshevik aim of the world revolution can be pursued equally in peace or war. In fact, a Bolshevist peace is only another form of war. If they do not for the moment overwhelm with armies, they can undermine with propaganda. Not a shot may be fired along the whole front, not a bayonet may be fixed, not a battalion may move, and yet invasion may be proceeding swiftly and relentlessly. The peasants are roused against the landlords, the workmen against their employers, the railways and public service are induced to strike, the soldiers are incited to mutiny and kill their officers, the mob are raised against the middle classes to murder them, to plunder their houses, to steal their belongings, to debauch their wives and carry off their children; an elaborate network of secret societies entangles honest political action; the Press is bought wherever possible. This was what Poland dreaded and will now have reason to dread still more; and this was the cause, even more than the gathering of the Russian armies on the Polish front, continuous for nearly a year, that led the Poles to make that desperate military sally or counter-stroke which English Liberal opinion has so largely misunderstood, and which Socialist opinion has so successfully misrepresented'.

Recall for a moment that phrase in Churchill's article of 1920: "not a shot may be fired" and Churchill's realization that, even without a shot being fired, Poland could be subjugated: and then come forward 26 years here to Westminster College and the same clear echo, reinforced by nearly three decades of further experience: 'I do not believe that Soviet Russia desires war. What they desire is the fruits of war and the indefinite expansion of their power and doctrines'.

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Churchill's detestation of Communism was complete. Yet the centre of his political philosophy was the survival of parliamentary democracy. And to ensure this survival, he was prepared to consider any expedient. Twice, in his lifetime this included the expedient of working with Communist Russia as an active ally. The first occasion was in the summer of 1918, after the German breakthrough on the western front: a breakthrough only made possible because the Russia of Lenin and Trotsky had made its peace with Germany, thus liberating millions of German soldiers for active service in the western front. To halt the German advance, Churchill proposed a deal with the Bolsheviks: if they would reopen the eastern front against Germany, Britain (and America) would jointly guarantee the survival of the Bolshevik revolution. 'Let us never forget', he wrote in a memorandum for the Cabinet of 7 April 1918, 'that Lenin and Trotsky are fighting with ropes round their necks. Show them any real chance of consolidating their power, of getting some kind of protection against the vengeance of a counter-revolution, and they would be non-human not to embrace it'.

Churchill proposed sending some senior Allied statesman, such as Theodore Roosevelt, to Russia, to be at Trotsky's side when war was again declared by Russia on Germany, and to act as 'a rallying point' sufficiently prominent for all patriotic Russians to fix their gaze on it. Theodore Roosevelt would become the Commissar of the Allies and with the full authority and power of Britain and America combined to ensure — as Churchill put it — 'safeguarding the permanent fruits of the revolution'.

Twenty years later, when Hitler's dominance of Europe was almost complete, Churchill again argued in favour of an alliance with the Soviet Union. When, in June 1941, Hitler attacked the Soviet Union, Churchill immediately offered Russia all the military and economic assistance which Britain could provide (and did provide, at considerable cost): 'The Nazi regime' he said then, in a broadcast on 22 June 1941, 'is indistinguishable from the worst features of Communism. It is devoid of all theme and principle except appetite and racial domination. It excels all forms of human wickedness in the efficiency of its cruelty and ferocious aggression'.

Churchill's broadcast continued: 'No one has been a more consistent opponent of Communism than I have for the last twenty-five years. I will unsay no word that I have spoken about it. But all this fades away before the spectacle which is now unfolding. The past with its crimes, its follies and its tragedies, flashes away'.

'We have', Churchill went on, 'but one aim and one single, irrevocable purpose. We are resolved to destroy Hitler and every vestige of the Nazi regime. From this nothing will turn us — nothing. That is our policy and that is our declaration. It follows, therefore, that we shall give whatever help we can to Russia and to the Russian people. We shall appeal to all our friends and allies in every part of the world to take the same course and pursue it, as we shall, faithfully and steadfastly to the end'.

* * *

Twenty years before this decisive broadcast — by the end of 1920 — one can already find three interwoven strands in Churchill's political philosophy: 'the

appeasement of class bitterness' at home, 'the appeasement of the fearful hatreds and antagonisms abroad', and the defense of Parliamentary democracy and democratic values in Britain, in western Europe, and in the territories under British rule or control. Wherever possible, Churchill believed that the method to be used must be conciliation, the route to be chosen was the middle way, the path of moderation. But where force alone could preserve the libertarian values, force would have to be used. It could only be a last resort — the horrors of war, and the very nature of democracy, ensured that — but in the last resort, it might be necessary to defend those values by force of arms.

By 1921 these three strands, and all their ramifications, were clear in Churchill's mind. He was forty four years old, and he could look back on twenty years of public life, including four wartime years, through almost all of which he had been an active participant at the centre of policymaking, arguing his points with men of experience and expertise, testing his ideas amid the daily practical problems of departmental business, and reflecting, with each year, on the evolution of the world scene, and the nature of man.

Churchill believed at all times in speaking the truth as he saw it — as he said here at Westminster College — to have 'full liberty to give my true and faithful counsel in these anxious and baffling times'.

These reflections were sometimes sombre. As Churchill told his own constituents on 11 November 1922, six years after the armistice (and 26 years before Fulton):

> What a disappointment the Twentieth Century has been
> How terrible & how melancholy
> is long series of disastrous events
> wh have darkened its first 20 years.
> We have seen in ev country a dissolution,
> a weakening of those bonds,
> a challenge to those principles
> a decay of faith
> an abridgement of hope
> on wh structure & ultimate existence
> of civilised society depends.
> We have seen in ev part of globe
> one gt country after another
> wh had erected an orderly, a peaceful
> a prosperous structure of civilised society,
> relapsing in hideous succession
> into bankruptcy, barbarism or anarchy.

Churchill then spoke of each of the areas which were in turmoil: China and Mexico 'sunk into confusion'; Russia where 'that little set of Communist criminals ... have exhausted millions of the Russian people'; Ireland, scene of an 'enormous retrogression of civilisation & Christianity'; Egypt and India, where 'we see among millions of people hitherto shielded by superior science & superior law a desire to shatter the structure by which they live & to return blindly & heedlessly to primordial chaos'. He then went on to warn of the future:

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& abridgement of human species,
not only by a vast impoverishment
& reduction in means of existence
but also that destructive tendencies
have not yet run their course?
And only intense, concerted & prolonged efforts
among all nations
can avert further & perhaps even greater calamities.

Speaking in Paris fourteen years later, on 24 September 1936, after the rise of Hitler, Churchill stressed the need to maintain parliamentary democracy, and liberal civilization. He also explained why the democracies could never submit to Nazi or Communist rule, asking his audience: 'How could we bear, nursed as we have been in a free atmosphere, to be gagged and muzzled; to have spies, eavesdroppers and delators at every corner; to have even private conversation caught up and used against us by the Secret Police and all their agents and creatures; to be arrested and interned without trial; or to be tried by political or Party courts for crimes hitherto unknown to civil law. How could we bear to be treated like schoolboys when we are grown-up men; to be turned out on parade by tens of thousands to march and cheer for this slogan or for that; to see philosophers, teachers and authors bullied and toiled to death in concentration camps; to be forced every hour to conceal the natural workings of the human intellect and the pulsations of the human heart? Why, I say that rather than submit to such oppression, there is no length we would not go to . . .'.

There were still some people, Churchill continued, who believed that the only choice for Europe was between 'two violent extremes'. This was not his view. 'Between the doctrines of Comrade Trotsky and those of Dr. Goebbels' — he said — 'there ought to be room for you and me, and a few others, to cultivate opinions of our own'. No aggression, he warned, from wherever it came, could be condoned. All aggressive action must be judged, not from the standpoint of Right and Left, but, as he put it, of 'right or wrong'.

Politically, Churchill was very much alone at this time; but slowly, in the Trade Unions, in business circles, among the economists of the LSE, even in the Labour Party, his support for a Middle Way between facism and communism was gaining ground. It was from this standpoint that Churchill looked on the Spanish Civil War. 'I refuse to become the partisan of either side', he told the House of Commons on 14 April 1937. As to Communism and Nazism, he added: 'I hope not to be called upon to survive in the world under a Government of either of these dispensations. I cannot feel any enthusiasm for these rival creeds. I feel unbounded sorrow and sympathy for the victims'.

Throughout Churchill's so-called Wilderness Years, the decade from 1929 to 1939 when he was out of office, Churchill continued to publish articles drawing attention to the Nazi terror and Soviet tyranny. In Oxford, on 22 May 1937, he told the assembled students: 'It is sometimes said that Communism and Fasc-

ism are poles apart,' he said. 'Perhaps they are. But what difference is there between life at the North Pole and life at the South Pole. Perhaps as one crawls out of one's igloo there may be a few more penguins at the one or polar bears at the other. At both, life is miserable. For my part I propose to remain in the Temperate Zone.'

Churchill's concept of democracy involved the linked factors of democratic leadership, and of democratic example. In opposing Neville Chamberlain's search for a compromise with Hitler, he warned the House of Commons, on 21 December 1938, after the return of Lord Halifax from a visit to Hitler: 'If it were thought that we were making terms for ourselves at the expense either of small nations or of large conceptions which are dear, not only to many nations, but to millions of people in every nation, a knell of despair would resound through many parts of Europe'.

Churchill always rejected any policy which might lead to confusion or division among the democracies, or in democratic behaviour: as he was to say 9 years later, here at Westminster College: 'It is necessary that constancy of mind, persistency of purpose, and the grand simplicity of decision shall guide and rule the conduct of the English-speaking peoples': but in 1937 he saw no such constancy, persistency or simplicity in British policy: only weakness, confusion — and even duplicity. As for America: isolation was still the order of the day, and the mass of American opinion, as Churchill phrased it, 'remote and indifferent'.

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I have spoken of Churchill's innermost concern for the survival of western democracy — on both sides of the Atlantic — and of how, to ensure the survival of democracy he was prepared to enlist any help that could be found.

From 1937 to 1939 this included help from the Soviet Union. On 13 April 1939 he told the House of Commons in one of several speeches urging Anglo-Soviet talks: 'The other day I tried to show the House the deep interest that Russia had against the further eastward extension of the Nazi power. It is upon that deep, natural, legitimate interest that we must rely, and I am sure we shall hear from the Government that the steps they are taking are those which will enable us to receive the fullest possible co-operation from Russia, and that no prejudices on the part of England or France will be allowed to interfere with the closest co-operation between the two countries, thus securing to our harassed and anxious combinations the unmeasured,if somewhat uncertain, but enormous aid of the Russian power'.

These hopes were in vain. The British Government of the day — led by Neville Chamberlain — was reluctant to embark on the course which Churchill advised, and Stalin deemed his immediate interest to lie in a pact with Hitler: not to defend Poland, but to partition her.

Churchill's other hope lay in the United States. But here too he was disappointed. Of course he understood the strength of Non-Interventionist feeling, but he also hoped to be able himself to influence American opinion towards a greater involvement in helping to preserve the European democracies; for he believed at the core of his being that the only way to preserve any one democracy was for all the democratic states to act in clear, open and declared unison.

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On 8 August 1939 Churchill set out his thoughts on dictatorship and democracy in a direct broadcast to the United States: 'One thing has struck me as very strange' he said, 'and that is the resurgence of the one-man power after all these centuries of experience and progress. It is curious how the English-speaking peoples have always had this horror of one-man power. They are quite ready to follow a leader for a time, as long as he is serviceable to them; but the idea of handing themselves over, lock, stock and barrel, body and soul, to one man, and worshiping him as if he were an idol — that has always been odious to the whole theme and nature of our civilisation'.

Churchill's broadcast continued: 'The architects of the American Constitution were as careful as those who shaped the British Constitution to guard against the whole life and fortunes, and all the laws and freedoms of the nation, being placed in the hands of a tyrant. Checks and counterchecks in the body politic, large devolutions of State government, instruments and process of free debate, frequent recurrence to first principles, the right of opposition to the most powerful governments, and above all ceaseless vigilance, have preserved, and will preserve, the broad characteristics of British and American institutions. But in Germany, on a mountain peak, there sits one man who in a single day can release the world from the fear which now oppresses it; or in a single day can plunge all that we have and are into a volcano of smoke and flame'.

'If Herr Hitler does not make war', Churchill added, 'there will be no war'.

Four weeks later, Hitler invaded Poland, and on 3 September 1939 both Britain and France declared war on Germany. 'This is no war', Churchill said that day 'of domination or imperial aggrandisement or material gain; no war to shut any country out of its sunlight and means of progress. It is a war, viewed in its inherent quality, to establish, on impregnable rocks, the rights of the individual, and it is a war to establish and revive the stature of man . . .'

As we have seen again and again, Churchill believed that if the Government gave an honest lead, the public would follow. But it was essential, as he saw it, to face difficulties straight on; and it was because of this belief that he was able, throughout the thirties, his so-called Wilderness Years, to read the warning signs as they occurred, and without any self delusion as to what they meant.

Nor was his assertion in 1939, that handing over power to a single man was 'odious' to Anglo-Saxon civilization, a mere oratorial flourish. Although it was heartbreaking for him personally to relinquish power in 1945 — believing that he had so much still to give to the peacemaking process, by means of his enormous personal authority, knowledge of past errors, goodwill of so many of the world statesmen (including Harry Truman) and understanding of current and emerging problems — it was nevertheless the British people's good fortune that he was such a profound democrat, relinquishing power within hours of electoral defeat. Indeed, as he himself later recalled: 'The verdict of the electors had been so overwhelmingly expressed that I did not wish to remain even for an hour responsible for their affairs'. That same evening 27 July 1945, Churchill issued a statement to the Press which included the sentence: 'Immense responsibilities abroad and at home fall upon the new Government, and we must all hope that they will be successful in bearing them'.

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'Civilization', Churchill wrote in his novel Savrola at the turn of the century, was 'a state of society where moral forces begin to escape from the tyranny of physical forces'. But since the end of the first world war, he had seen those moral forces themselves being challenged, not by any physical enemy, but by immoral forces of man's own making. To George Bernard Shaw he wrote, on 2 September 1928, of men and women in general: 'everything they try will fail — owing to their deplorable characteristics, and their liking for these very characteristics. The only world fit for them is a Hugger Mugger world. Ants and Bees would be worthy of better things . . .'

Yet Churchill believed in the ability of man to improve his situation, and to defend what had already been achieved: the ability of man in general, not simply of individual leaders. Since 1940, he himself has come to epitomize the war leader, the man of the hour, the indispensible hero. But all his life, he regarded such a person as having no independent existence. 'Do you think I am what I am', his fictional hero, Savrola asked at the turn of the century, 'because I have changed all those minds, or because I best express their views? Am I their master or their slave? Believe me I have no illusions'. And on his eightieth birthday, at a ceremony in Westminster Hall, London, he declared — looking back over the war years: 'It was a nation and race dwelling all around the globe that had the lion's heart. I had the luck to be called upon to give the roar.'

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To outsiders, Churchill could sometimes seem insensitive and harsh, cynical and brusque. His outbursts of temper, recorded by colleagues at times of incredible national stress and wartime danger, were interpreted by some — and have been echoed recently by several historians and television programmes, as a sign of an underlying tyrannical nature. But to those who worked closest with him, whether as Cabinet colleagues or civil servants, the quality of his mind was clear, as indeed was his overriding gentleness of character, his humour and sense of fun, as well as his deep understanding of human nature, history, and public affairs.

One civil servant, Eric Seal, who was Churchill's Principal Private Secretary throughout the testing time of 1940, but who never became a close personal friend, wrote, in retrospect, of Churchill's motive force: '. . . the key word in any understanding of Winston Churchill is the simple word "Liberty". Throughout his life, through many changes and vicissitudes, Winston Churchill stood for liberty. He intensely disliked, and reacted violently against, all attempts to regiment and dictate opinion. In this attitude, he was consistent throughout his political life. He believed profoundly in the freedom of the spirit, and the liberty of man to work out his own salvation, and to be himself in his own way. His defense of the British Government in India is not at variance with this idea; he defended British rule in India because he thought that it brought individual freedom in its train. He demanded for himself freedom to follow his own star, and he stood out for a like liberty for all men. All organized attempts to dictate to men what or how they should think, whether by the Nazis in Germany, or by the Communists in Russia, incurred his passionate hatred and fell under his anethema. In the last resort, this was the mainspring of his action'.

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This was a private opinion, not written for publication. But in August 1944 Churchill himself sent a public message to the Italian people which contained, in seven questions, a compact summary of his own philosophy. The message contained seven 'quite simple, practical tests', as Churchill called them, by which freedom could be recognized in the modern world:

1. 'Is there the right to free expression of opinion and of opposition and criticism of the Government of the day?
2. 'Have the people the right to turn out a Government of which they disapprove, and are constitutional means provided by which they can make their will apparent?
3. 'Are their courts of justice free from violence by the Executive and from threats of mob violence, and free of all association with particular political parties?
4. 'Will these courts administer open and well-established laws which are associated in the human mind with the broad principles of decency and justice?
5. 'Will there be fair play for poor as well as for rich, for private persons as well as Government officials?
6. 'Will the rights of the individual, subject to his duties to the State, be maintained and asserted and exalted?
7. 'Is the ordinary peasant or workman who is earning a living by daily toil and striving to bring up a family free from the fear that some grim police organisation under the control of a single party, like the Gestapo, started by the Nazi and Fascist parties, will tap him on the shoulder and pack him off without fair or open trial to bondage or ill-treatment?'.

Even as Churchill asked these questions his beliefs were about to be put to their most terrible test: the struggle between Stalin and the west over the future of Poland: a struggle which the west lost, and the lessons of which were to be the culminating theme of his Fulton speech: lessons which are still with us, alas, today.

In the aftermath of the first world war, Churchill had been a determined supporter of Polish independence — and an admirer of Poland's brilliant defense of its own sovereignty against the Red Army in 1920. Thirteen years later, in 1933, he was scandalized when British politicians began to emulate Hitler in denouncing the newly independent States of Europe and in belittling them as unreal or unstable creatures. Czechoslovakia and Poland were particularly singled out for abuse — both by Hitler, and by the British Ministers: Ramsay MacDonald — the Prime Minister of the National, All Party Government — called them 'ghosts'.

On 13 April 1933 Churchill told the House of Commons: 'The Prime Minister last year, in a speech at Geneva, used a very striking phrase when he described Europe as a house inhabited by ghosts. That is to misinterpret the situation. Europe is a house inhabited by fierce, strong, living entities. Poland is not a ghost: Poland is a reincarnation. I think it a wonderful thing that Polish unity should have re-emerged from long hideous eclipse and bondage, when the Poles were divided between three empires and made to fight one another in all the wars that took place'. Churchill added: 'I rejoice that Poland has been reconstituted. I cannot think of any event arising out of the Great War which can be considered to be a more thoroughly righteous result of the struggle than

the reunion of this people, who have preserved their national soul through all the years of oppression and division and whose reconstitution of their nationhood is one of the most striking facts in European history. Do not let us be led, because there are many aspects of Polish policy that we do not like or agree with, into dwelling upon the small points of disagreement, and forget what a very great work has been achieved, a work of liberation and of justice, in the reconstitution of Poland. I trust she will live long to enjoy the freedom of the lands which belong to her, a freedom which was gained by the swords of the victorious Allies'.

On 25 September 1939, as a result of the Nazi-Soviet Pact, Hitler and Stalin ordered the partition of Poland between Russia and Germany. Poland was once more enslaved. Yet Churchill also realized that in the end, Hitler and Nazism could only be destroyed if Stalin joined the Allies.

Here then was the terrible dilemma of the second world war in which Churchill too was soon to be caught up. The Nazi-Soviet partition of Poland distressed Churchill enormously. But he knew that the line of the partition gave Russia those areas which, in 1920, Britain had also wanted to give Russia — where Poles were in a minority. He therefore told the House of Commons, on 1 October 1939: 'Poland has been again overrun by two of the great Powers which held her in bondage for 150 years, but were unable to quench the spirit of the Polish nation. The heroic defense of Warsaw shows that the soul of Poland is indestructible, and that she will rise again like a rock, which may for a spell be submerged by a tidal wave, but which remains a rock'. Churchill's speech continued: 'Russia has pursued a cold policy of self-interest. We could have wished that the Russian armies should be standing on their present line as the friends and allies of Poland instead of as invaders. But that the Russian armies should stand on this line was clearly necessary for the safety of Russia against the Nazi menace'. Churchill ended his remarks with a profound reflection: 'I cannot forecast to you', he said, 'the action of Russia. It is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma; but perhaps there is a key. That key is Russian national interest. It cannot be in accordance with the interest or the safety of Russia that Germany should plant itself upon the shores of the Black Sea, or that it should overrun the Balkan States and subjugate the Slavonic peoples of southeastern Europe. That would be contrary to the historic life-interests of Russia'.

In June 1941, Hitler invaded the Soviet Union, and Churchill made his unilateral offer to Russia of alliance and aid. But still the Polish question cast its shadow on the new, and vital alliance. In April 1943 the Soviet murders at Katyn were revealed: more than 10,000 Polish officers killed in cold blood by the Russians.

But it was in August 1944 with the Warsaw uprising, and with Stalin's refusal to help the Polish insurgents, that Churchill's sense of anger and disillusion were heightened — and unassuaged.

The uprising had begun on 1 August 1944 when Soviet forces, having crossed the Vistula to the Warsaw side of the river were less than ten miles from the city. On 4 August 1944 Churchill appealed to Stalin, on behalf of the Poles to send aid. On the following day, Stalin refused.

British planes, and Polish volunteers flew nearly 1,400 miles from Italy and back to drop aid: but Stalin refused even a 100 mile flight, or use of his airports

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by the Allies, or any further military advance. 'Can you not give them some further help', Churchill telegraphed Stalin on August 12: 'as the distance from Italy is so very great'. But still Stalin refused. Nor would two further appeals from Churchill persuade him to help the Poles in their agony.

The Warsaw uprising was crushed. Stalin now prepared his new Polish plan, and on 5 January 1945, against the wishes of both Churchill and Roosevelt, Stalin recognized his own communist nominees, the Lublin Committee, as the provisional Government of Poland. Twelve days later, Soviet forces entered Warsaw, and with them — Stalin's puppet Government. The future of Poland — to be discussed in vain at Yalta a month later — had already been decided by force of arms: Soviet arms.

At Yalta, though much was tried, nothing could be done to move Stalin from his determination to create a Communist Poland, under a Soviet military power that was already in place; and Poland, as Churchill later recalled, 'was to prove the first of the great causes which led to the breakdown of the grand alliance'. Bluntly, Churchill told Stalin at Yalta: 'I want the Poles to be able to live freely, and live their own lives in their own way'.

Roosevelt supported Churchill in this plea. But the Britain and American hopes, of democratic elections in Poland, had been challenged at Yalta, and were dashed after Yalta. On 29 April 1945 Churchill wrote to Stalin that the British, 'would never feel that this war will have ended rightly, unless Poland has a fair deal in the full sense of sovereignty, independence, and freedom . . .' Churchill added that the pledge which he and Roosevelt had given at Yalta 'for a sovereign, free and independent Poland, with a Government fully and adequately representing all the democratic elements among Poles, is for us a matter of honour and duty'.

Churchill's letter to Stalin continued (it was just a year before he came here to Westminster College): 'There is not much comfort in looking into a future when you and the countries you dominate, . . . are all drawn up on one side, and those who rally to the English-speaking nations . . . are on the other. It is quite obvious that their quarrel would tear the world to pieces and that all of us leading men on either side who had anything to do with that, would be shamed before history. Even embarking on a long period of suspicions, of abuse and counter-abuse, and of opposing policies, would be a disaster, hampering the great developments of world prosperity for the masses . . .'

Churchill's letter ended: 'Do not, I beg you, my friend Stalin underrate the divergences which are opening about matters which you may think are small to us, but which are symbolic of the way the English-speaking democracies look at life'.

Stalin of course, made no concessions — and in a letter to Anthony Eden on 4 May 1945 Churchill warned Eden of the new situation with Soviet forces in effective control from the Baltic to the Adriatic (the very same line that he was to describe here at Fulton ten months later as the 'Iron Curtain').

In his letter to Eden, Churchill pointed out how, as a result of the continuing Soviet advances the territory of Poland would be, as he put it, 'completely engulfed and buried, deep in Russian-occupied lands'. And that Poland would (I quote) 'sink with many other States into the vast zone of Russian-controlled Europe . . . police-government'.

* * *

The second world war had ended. As Churchill had seen, retrogression — the flight from justice, the lapse into anarchy, the return to totalitarianism — constituted the main dangers confronting the development of the twentieth century. He had expressed that view clearly in 1928, in relation to the first world war: 'Think of all these people', he wrote '— decent, educated, the past laid out before them — what to avoid, what to do etc — patriotic, loyal, clean, trying their utmost — what a ghastly muddle they made of it! Unteachable from infancy to tomb — there is the first and main characteristic of mankind'. And yet, as Churchill wrote on 21 May 1938, at the height of the Munich crisis: 'It is a crime to despair. We must learn from misfortune the means of future strength'.

And in his address here at Westminster College eight years later, in 1946, he set out yet again, as he had decade after decade for more than fifty years, the beliefs he still held, and the vision he still cherished, for mankind's future. As Churchill declared: 'When I stand here this quiet afternoon I shudder to visualise what is actually happening to millions now and what is going to happen in this period when famine stalks the earth. None can compute what has been called "the unestimated sum of human pain". Our supreme task and duty is to guard the homes of the common people from the horrors and miseries of another war'.

In his speech here, Churchill went on to give, as his studied opinion: 'the people of any country have the right, and should have the power by constitutional action, by free unfettered elections, with secret ballot, to choose or change the character or form of government under which they dwell; that freedom of speech and thought should reign; that courts of justice, independent of the executive, unbiased by any party, should administer laws which have received the broad assent of large majorities or are consecrated by time and custom. Here are the title deeds of freedom which should lie in every cottage home'.

During the course of his speech here at Westminster College. Churchill had also set out, as you know, the steps he believed should be taken: above all what he called (I quote) 'the fraternal association of the English-speaking peoples . . . not only the growing friendship and mutual understanding between our two vast but kindred systems of society, but the continuance of the intimate relationship between our military advisers, leading to common study of potential dangers'.

Churchill was emphatic here at Westminster — on the need for Anglo-American co-operation based on the eventual post-war recovery of Britain, and on a strengthening of Anglo-American bonds. As he said (of Britain) 'do not suppose that we shall not come through the glorious years of agony, or that half a century from now, you will not see 70 or 80 millions of Britons spread about the world and united in defence of our traditions, our way of life, and of the world causes which you and we espouse. If the population of the English-speaking Commonwealths be added to that of the United States with all that such cooperation implies in the air, on the sea, all over the globe and in science and in industry, and in moral force, there will be no quivering, precarious balance of power to offer its temptation to ambition or adventure. On the contrary, there will be an overwhelming assurance of security'.

* * *

These concepts, which Churchill set out so clearly here at Westminster College, have not been entirely forgotten. May I quote, briefly, from a recent example: 'We are moving already beyond exchanges of views toward common strategic perceptions and concrete acts. We and our allies are taking common steps to restrain Soviet aggression and to restore our strength. On Poland, we have collectively sent a firm signal to the Soviet Union. The Soviets are now well aware that intervention would bring severe and lasting consequences. Indeed, the restraint we have seen offers some evidence of the benefits of alliance, cohesion and resolve'.

These words were spoken only two days ago in Washington by Secretary of State Alexander Haig, and they reminded me forcibly of two of Churchill's remarks in his speech here.

The first: 'The United States stands at this time, at the pinnacle of world power. It is a solemn moment, for the American democracy. For with primacy in power, is also joined an awe-inspiring accountability to the future'.

The second remark made here in 1946, and which is as relevant today as it was then: 'this' Churchill said speaking of Poland, Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria subjected to Soviet rule 'is certainly not the Liberated Europe we fought to build up'.

I should like to end, if I may, — and surely no place is more suitable to end this than here at Westminster College — with the central theme of Churchill's Fulton speech, in which he drew, both on his knowledge of past Soviet behaviour and on his own experience of warning in vain against the Nazi danger in the 1930s.

As Churchill said (and with this quotation I shall end) '... what we have to consider here today, while time remains, is the permanent prevention of war and the establishment of conditions of freedom and democracy as rapidly as possible in all countries. Our difficulties and dangers will not be removed by closing our eyes to them. They will not be removed by mere waiting to see what happens; nor will they be removed by a policy of appeasement. What is needed is a settlement, and the longer this is delayed, the more difficult it will be and the greater our dangers will become.

'From what I have seen of our Russian friends and Allies during the war, I am convinced that there is nothing they admire so much as strength and there is nothing for which they have less respect than for weakness, especially military weakness. For that reason the old doctrine of a balance of power is unsound. We cannot afford, if we can help it, to work on narrow margins, offering temptations to a trial of strength. If the Western Democracies stand together in strict adherence to the principles of the United Nations Charter, their influence for furthering those principles will be immense and no one is likely to molest them. If however they become divided or falter in their duty and if these all-important years are allowed to slip away then indeed catastrophe may overwhelm us all.

'Last time I saw it all coming and cried aloud to my own fellow-countrymen and to the world, but no one paid any attention. Up till the year 1933 or even 1935, Germany might have been saved from the awful fate which has overtaken her and we might all have been spared the miseries Hitler let loose upon

mankind. There never was a war in all history easier to prevent by timely action than the one which has just desolated such great areas of the globe. It could have been prevented in my belief without the firing of a single shot, and Germany might be powerful, prosperous and honoured today; but no one would listen and one by one we were all sucked into the awful whirlpool. We surely must not let that happen again'.

EPILOGUE

Historical research is never ended; and on my return to England, after delivering the above lecture, I naturally continued with my Churchill researches. Indeed, even while preparing the lecture itself for publication, I came across material bearing directly on Churchill and the Fulton speech. From this material one sees how Churchill closely followed from day to day events in those regions of Europe controlled by Russia since the end of the second world war. Thus, on 15 October 1945 he wrote to a friend: 'I shudder to read the accounts that come to me of the Russian maltreatment of Vienna and the paralysis of Allied assistance'.

One of the most fascinating documents to emerge during my research since my return is a letter which Churchill wrote to the Labour Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, and to his Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, only two days after speaking to you at Westminster College. His letter, dated 7 March 1946, read in full:

'The President told me, as we started on our journey from Washington to Fulton, Missouri, that the United States is sending the body of the Turkish Ambassador, who died here some days ago, back to Turkey in the American battleship MISSOURI, which is the vessel on which the Japanese surrender was signed and is probably the strongest battleship afloat. He added that the MISSOURI would be accompanied by a strong task force which would remain in the Marmara for an unspecified period. Admiral Leahy told me that the task force would consist of another battleship of the greatest power, two of the latest and strongest aircraft carriers, several cruisers and about a dozen destroyers, with the necessary ancillary ships. Both mentioned the fact that the MISSOURI class carry over 140 anti-aircraft guns. I asked about the secrecy of this movement and was told that it was known that the body of the late Ambassador was being returned in a warship but that the details of the task force would not become known before March 15. I feel it my duty to report these facts to you, though it is quite possible you may have already been informed through other channels. At any rate, please on no account make use of the information until you have received it from channels, other than my personal contact with the President.

'The above strikes me as a very important act of state and one calculated to make Russia understand that she must come to reasonable terms of discussion with the Western Democracies. From our point of view, I am sure that the arrival and stay of such a powerful American Fleet in the Straits must be entirely beneficial, both as reassuring Turkey and Greece and as placing a demurrer on what Bevin called cutting our life-line through the Mediterranean by the establishment of a Russian naval base at Tripoli.

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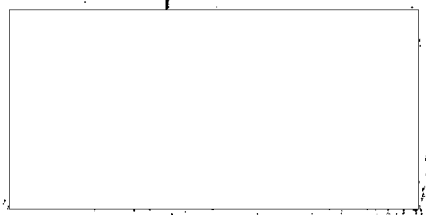
'I did not consult the President on the exact text of my speech at Fulton before I finished it, but he read a mimiographed reproduction which was made on the train in its final form, several hours before I delivered it. He told me he thought it was admirable and would do nothing but good, though it would make a stir. He seemed equally pleased during and after. I also showed it to Mr. Byrnes the night before leaving Wasington, making it clear that this was quite private and informal. He was excited about it and did not suggest any alterations. Admiral Leahy, to whom I showed it first of all, was enthusiastic. Naturally I take complete and sole personal responsibility for what I said, for I altered nothing as the result of my contacts with these high American authorities. I think you ought to know exactly what the position is and hope you will observe the very strong and precise terms in which I disclaim any official mission or status of any kind and that I spoke only for myself. If necessary these words of mine could be quoted.

'Having spent nearly three days in most intimate, friendly contact with the President and his immediate circle, and also having had a long talk with Mr. Byrnes, I have no doubt that the Executive forces here are deeply distressed by the way they are being treated by Russia and that they do not intend to put up with treaty breaches in Persia or encroachments in Manchuria and Korea, or pressure for the Russian expansion at the expense of Turkey or in the Mediterranean. I am convinced that some show of strength and resisting power is necessary to a good settlement with Russia. I predict that this will be the prevailing opinion in the United States in the near future'.

Following his return to England from Fulton, Churchill continued to study Soviet behaviour, and saw no reason to change the views which he had expressed in his speech here at Westminster College, or in the letter quoted above. Seven months after returning to England, Churchill wrote again to Clement Attlee, in a letter charged with irony and vision: 'It is clear to me that only two reasons prevent the westward movement of the Russian armies to the United States and the Atlantic. The first is their virtue and self-restraint. The second, the possession by the United States of the Atomic bomb'.



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MARTIN GILBERT

Martin Gilbert was born in London, England in 1936. Following his schooling in London, he served for two years in the Intelligence Section of the British Army.

In 1957, Mr. Gilbert entered Magdalen College, Oxford, where he graduated in history with First Class Honors. He then spent two years doing research on recent history at St. Anthony's College, Oxford.

Mr. Gilbert was elected to a Fellowship at Merton College, Oxford, in 1962. In the same year he was appointed research assistant to Randolph S. Churchill on the official life of Sir Winston Churchill. Upon Randolph Churchill's death in 1968, he assumed full responsibility for the project, and he has written Volumes III-V, which bring Sir Winston's career to 1939. He is presently completing Volume VI, and Volume VII (1945-1965) is in progress.

In 1967, Mr. Gilbert was appointed Recent History Correspondent to the London *Sunday Times*. He has lectured at many colleges and universities in both Great Britain and the United States, and he has travelled widely in Europe and Asia.

Mr. Gilbert is the author of many books, including a series of six historical atlases; a general history of Europe, "The European Powers 1900-45"; "The Roots of Appeasement," a study of British policy between the wars; and, with Richard Gott, "The Appeasers." He has also written numerous articles on historic topics. He is married and is the father of a daughter and a son.

THE CROSBY KEMPER LECTURESHIP

The Crosby Kemper Lectureship was established in 1979 by a grant from the Crosby Kemper Foundations of Kansas City, Mo. It is intended to provide for lectures by authorities on British history and Sir Winston Churchill, himself, at the Winston Churchill Memorial and Library on the campus of Westminster College. The Lectureship has been established under the auspices of the British Institute of the United States and the Winston Churchill Memorial and Library. The lecture by Martin Gilbert inaugurates this important forum.

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